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ABSTRACT

Technical assistance is provided concerning documentation of functional vision loss for Florida students with visual impairments. The functional vision observation should obtain enough information for determination of special service eligibility. The observation is designed to supplement information on the medical eye examination, and is conducted by a teacher of visually impaired students or an appropriately trained diagnostician. Components of a functional vision observation include medical eye examination information, developmental and functional visual response information, and notation of classroom modifications required. The paper contains a four-page functional vision observation form, and 13 bibliographical references with annotations. (JDD)

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPER

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUREAU OF EDUCATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

# FY 1990 - 4 March 1990	FUNCTIONAL VISION OBSERVATION	Refer questions to Carol Allman (904) 488-1106 SC 278-1106

Background

Rule 6A-6.03014,(4)(a)3, FAC, requires documentation of functional vision loss as determined through a functional vision observation of students with visual impairments. It is necessary that the functional vision observation be conducted by a teacher of visually impaired students or appropriately trained diagnostician in order for a student to be determined eligible for programs for students with visual impairments. A functional vision observation provides valuable information regarding a student's ability to function within a variety of settings. The information is essential for writing an appropriate individual educational plan and may address areas of visual stimulation, reading medium instruction, daily living skill instruction, and orientation and mobility training. In addition, the assessment provides information about recommended adjustments to be made to the student's environment (e.g., lighting, reading distances, and adaptive equipment).

Functional vision is defined as the efficient use of residual vision when operating within the environment. Since functional vision varies for each student depending on medical, motivational, and social factors, Rule 6A-6.03014, FAC, does not delineate specific aspects of functional vision, but clearly mandates that a trained professional (usually a teacher of the visually impaired) must observe and document each student's functional vision.

It is necessary to complete a functional vision observation for all students including those who lack any usable vision. Students with no functional vision can be assessed for adaptive equipment, test modifications, and travel skill training needs.

A functional vision observation is also required for reevaluation purposes (at least every three years) as outlined in Rule 6A-6.03014(4)(c), FAC. This technical assistance paper is in response to questions regarding the content of a functional vision observation.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPERS are produced periodically by the Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students to present discussions of current topics in the education for exceptional students. The TA Papers may be used for inservice sessions, technical assistance visit, parent organization meeting, or interdisciplinary discussion groups. Topics are identified by state steering committees, district personnel, individuals, or from program performance audits.

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Purpose

This technical assistance paper reviews aspects of functional vision observations that are used throughout the state, provides a form that consolidates functional vision information recorded by several districts in Florida (Appendix A), and an annotated bibliography of published functional vision assessments (Appendix B).

Format for Recording Functional Vision Observations

Functional vision observations have a wide range of components and vary greatly in detail of skill assessment. The initial functional vision observation should contain enough information for eligibility determination. It should supplement the information on the eye medical examination by delineating specific functional vision needs of the student in an educational setting.

An initial functional vision observation may not provide the same quantity or quality of information that would be obtained in subsequent functional vision assessments. As teachers become more familiar with a student and assess functional vision during reevaluation of the student, a more detailed accounting of visual functioning may result.

An analysis of formats of functional vision observations indicates that medical information, visual responses, and classroom modification recommendations are generally included as components on a functional vision observation form in Florida's school programs.

Medical Information

Medical eye examination information includes diagnosis, etiology, field loss, prognosis, and acuities as indicated by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. This medical information and use of visual aids as indicated by a low vision evaluation are recommendations made by medical personnel and are not observations made by teachers evaluating a student's functional vision. However, many districts find it useful to include this information on the functional vision form as background information. Such information provides a present level medical focus for the person conducting the functional vision observation.

Visual Response

For some students, observation of visual response may consist of a **developmentally sequenced** listing of behaviors including blink reflex, tracking and fixating reactions, pupillary response and movement toward light or objects. For other students, it may be more beneficial to record **functional** vision behaviors observed in a classroom setting or surrounding environment.

Observation of these behaviors will provide direction in planning vision stimulation activities, reading medium instruction, daily living skills instruction, and determining a need for orientation and mobility training. A reading medium recommendation can be made from recording visual responses of the student. Visual response information provides the groundwork for screening of behaviors that may indicate the need for a low vision evaluation.

Classroom Modifications

Recommendations for adaptations to the classroom can be determined by evaluating environmental adjustments (lighting, adaptive equipment, and seating arrangements), observing daily living skills, and addressing course and test modifications needed by the student. Observation of the student's behaviors will provide present levels of functioning in areas to be included on the individual educational plan.

Attached is a general form for functional vision observation recording (Appendix A). It is a consolidation of information generally provided on functional vision forms used throughout Florida. The form is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to replace functional vision observation forms currently in use by districts. Many districts have created forms to suit their own needs and some use a commercial format from sources listed in the annotated bibliography functional vision evaluations (Appendix B).

Appendix A

Functional Vision Observation

Date _____

Evaluator _____

Student _____

Date of Birth _____ Grade _____

School _____ Teacher _____

Medical Information

Date of Eye Report _____ Eye Doctor _____

Diagnosis _____

Etiology _____

Field Loss _____

Prognosis _____

Acuities:	Distance corrected/uncorrected	Near corrected/uncorrected
OD(right)	_____	_____
OS(left)	_____	_____

Visual Aids recommended

Reevaluation date: _____

AI

Visual Response

Developmental

yes	no		yes	no	
		1. Pupil reaction to light			4. Tracking ability
		Right eye			vertical
		Left eye			with object
		Both eyes			with light
		2. Blink response			horizontal
		to movement			with object
		to light			with light
		3. Light response			circular
		fixates on source			with object
		blinks			with light
		avoids			5. Object response
		reaches for source			fixates on
		quiets to light changes			reaches for
		turns toward source			over reaches
					under reaches
					avoids
					manipulates

Description of objects used in testing (size, color):

Functional

yes	no	
		1. Discriminates between objects.
		2. Visually searches for object.
		3. Identifies primary colors.
		4. Identifies pictures
		simple black line drawings
		from a book
		from a ditto
		5. Matches pictures
		simple black line drawings
		from a book
		from a ditto
		6. Locates familiar landmarks. (Distance _____)
		7. Locates unfamiliar landmarks. (Distance _____)
		8. Adapts easily to sudden changes in illumination.
		9. Visually avoids stationary obstructions.
		10. Travels independently indoors.
		11. Travels independently outdoors.

Description of materials and settings used in assessment:

Reading Medium: _____Print _____Large Print _____Braille

Reading Rate
(words per minute) _____ Print _____ Large Print _____ Braille

Print size: _____

Reading Behaviors:
Eye preference _____right _____left _____no preference

Reading distance _____inches

Fatigue rate: _____ minutes or hours

Head position: _____

Posture observations: _____

_____

Tracking observations: _____

_____

Comments (including student's behavior during testing, room conditions, etc.):

_____

_____

_____

Classroom Modifications

Testing modifications: _____

_____

Lighting recommendations: _____

_____

Seating arrangements: _____

_____

Adaptive Equipment: _____

_____

Course modifications: _____

_____

A3

Task-Time adjustments:

Reading:

_____

_____

Writing:

_____

_____

Mathematics:

_____

_____

Other:

_____

_____

General Daily Living Skills Observations:

Cares for self independently

_____Eating

_____Toileting

_____Dressing

_____Organizing personal belongings

Comments:

_____

_____

A4

Appendix B

Functional Vision Evaluations
Annotated Bibliography

Barraga, N. (1980). Program to develop efficiency in visual function. Louisville: American Printing House for the Blind.

Contains an evaluation of the level of visual functioning in low vision persons and provides a training program for efficient vision use. The program is based on normal developmental sequence of vision and can be used with students with a minimum mental age of three. Low Vision Observation Checklists and the Diagnostic Assessment Procedure Record Booklet can be ordered separately from the American Printing House for the Blind.

Bishop, V. E. (1988). Making choices in functional vision evaluations: "Noodles, needles, and haystacks". Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 82 (3), 94-99.

Provides formats for evaluating functional vision of preschool and school age visually handicapped students including multiply handicapped/visually handicapped children.

Brown, C. J. & Langley, M. B. (1984). Diagnostic/prescriptive model for training interdisciplinary personnel working with profoundly mentally handicapped learners. Tallahassee: Department of Education, Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students.

Contains a section on functional vision assessment outcomes for profoundly handicapped learners that can be used as a checklist for assessing this population.

Calvello, G. (1987). PAVII Project: Parents and visually impaired infants. San Francisco: Blind Babies Foundation.

Contains a functional vision screening checklist with a sequence of development from birth to 12 months and observation suggestions for assessing infants.

Costello, K. B., Pinkney, P. & Scheffers, W. (1982). Visual functioning assessment tool. Chicago: Stoelting Company.

An informal assessment of visual functioning to be used in an educational setting.

Czerwinski, M. H. (1983). Assessment of visual functioning: An educational guide. New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Contains a visual functioning checklist and assessment of the use of low vision aids and special equipment. Provides evaluation procedures for use of vision for near and distance tasks within the classroom. Most appropriate for school age visually impaired children with no additional handicaps.

Florida Department of Education (1983). Volume V-E: Project IVEY: Increasing visual efficiency.

Provides a Functional Vision Evaluation most appropriate for young or multihandicapped children and vision stimulation activities appropriate for all ages.

Hazekamp ,J. & Huebner, K. M. (1989). Program planning and evaluation for blind and visually impaired students, New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Outlines what educational programs need to do to serve blind and visually impaired youngsters effectively. It includes a chapter on assessing vision and provides a condensed version of a functional vision checklist summary sheet reprinted from Mangold (1982).

Langley, M. B. (1980). Functional vision inventory for the multiple and severely handicapped. Chicago: Stoelting Co.

Contains valuable information on issues related to visual assessment of severely profoundly handicapped, development of the visual process, a functional vision inventory profile, screening test, activities and guidelines for evaluating multihandicapped children. Information is also useful for assessing very young children.

Mangold, S. S. (1982). A teachers' guide to the special educational needs of blind and visually handicapped children. New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

A collection of curriculum and teaching techniques for use with visually impaired children. The guide contains a chapter on functional vision with criterion-referenced checklists.

Roessing, L. J. (1982). Functional vision: Criterion-referenced checklists. In S. Mangold (Ed.). A teachers' guide to the special educational needs of blind and visually handicapped children. New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Functional vision assessment is briefly discussed and the author presents a functional vision checklist developed and field- tested in California.

San Francisco State University. (1985). Vision assessment and program manual. Reprinted by Florida Department of Education.

Provides summary forms and a section on functional vision programming most appropriately used with multihandicapped, deaf-blind or very young children.

Swallow, R. M., Mangold, S. & Mangold, P. (1978). Informal assessment of developmental skills for visually handicapped students. New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Contains a Cumulative Record of Visual Functioning of Children and Youth with Severe Visual Impairments and Functional Vision Report for Visually Handicapped Students Reading Print which are appropriate as functional vision observations.